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ODD FELLOWSHIP.

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

Fortieth Annibersary, I. O. of O. F.

IN THE UNITED STATES,

PHILADELPHIA, APRIL 26, 1859.

BY JAMES B. NICHOLSON, P. G. M.

OF THE GRAND LODGE OF PENNSYLVANIA.

PHILADELPHIA:

U. S. STEAM-POWER BOOK AND JOB PRINTING OFFICE, LEDGER BUILDINGS.

1859.



ENGRAVED BY A. B. WALTER. — DAGUERRE-TYPED BY G. H. WEEKS.

James B. Nicholson

PAST GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF PENNSYLVANIA
I. O. O. F.

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ODD FELLOWSHIP.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

Philadelphia, April 27th, 1859.

JAMES B. NICHOLSON, ESQ.,

P. G. M., G. L. of Pennsylvania, I. O. of O. F.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:—We, your Brothers, Officers and Members of the R. W. Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, desire of you, for publication, a copy of your truly eloquent and excellent address, delivered 26th April, on the occasion of celebrating the Fortieth Anniversary of our beloved Order. Trusting you may comply with this sincere request of your co-laborers in the great enterprise of fraternal association,

We are yours in the bonds of F. L. and T.

ELIAS WILDMAN, M. W. G. M.,
M. RICHARDS MUCKLE, R. W. G. T.,
HENRY JOHN WHITE, W. G. C.,
N. B. ARCHAMBAULT, W. G. G.,
JOHN C. GARWOOD, P. G., No. 262,
THOMAS J. BUTLER, P. G., No. 5,
ALEXANDER PHILSON, P. G., No. 29,
GEORGE C. HOSTER, P. G., No. 99,
WM. F. RACKLIFF, P. G., No. 13,

From other engagements we had not the pleasure of hearing your oration, yet we most cheerfully unite in the request for its publication.

ROBT. M. FOUST, P. G., No. 237,	S. P. MARTIN, P. G., No. 237,
E. BOOTH, P. G., No. 29,	GEO. BERTRAM, P. G., No. 190,
W. W. JENKINS, P. G., No. 46,	AMOS BRIGGS, P. G., No. 223,
JAMES STOKES, P. G., No. 188,	E. G. CHORMAN, P. G., No. 201,
JOHN L. YOUNG, P. G., No. 61,	JAS. BINGHAM, P. G., No. 127,
WM. TREDENICK, P. G., No. 443,	JOHN G. MOXEY, P. G., No. 470,
R. J. FOUGERAY, P. G., No. 100,	SAM. C. FREMPT, P. G., No. 262,
WM. E. MASON, P. G., No. 5,	JOHN C. BERRY, P. G., No. 256,
CHAS. W. PACKER, P. G., No. 237,	F. J. KEFFER, P. G., No. 17.

Philadelphia, April 30th, 1859.

WORTHY SIRs AND BROTHERS:—In compliance with your request a copy of my address is placed at your disposal, in the hope that it may prove to be "for the good of the Order."

Truly your brother,

JAMES B. NICHOLSON.

To E. WILDMAN, M. W. G. M., M. R. MUCKLE, R. W. G. T., HENRY J. WHITE, W. G. C., and other Brothers.

P.
John B. Nicholson
18 Ag '04

ORATION.

MOST WORTHY GRAND MASTER, FRIENDS AND BROTHERS :

An innocent, angelic maiden went through the world upon errands of mercy, plainly attired ; possessing no outward attraction, save a sweet face and graceful figure, she was passed almost unnoticed by the gay, thoughtless world. Travel worn and weary, she sought for shelter and repose, she knocked timidly at the doors of the great, but her sweet, low voice, could not reach their ears ; pampered menials drove her scornfully away ; she entered the abodes of poverty and saw despair written on human brows. In a miserable tenement, the home of destitution, a wretched woman was nursing a dying infant, its shrunken, attenuated form was sinking from the pangs of hunger, into the repose of death ; when the little head fell quietly back, the poor mother looked quickly up, and, through blinding tears, caught a glance of the pitying countenance of the maiden ; she felt as if an angel in passing had touched her with its wings, the look of the maiden seemed like radiance from heaven.

In sorrow, the maiden traveled on, yet sometimes her countenance would be overspread with joy, so varied were her experiences. One day a gilded chariot, drawn by prancing steeds, whose feet seemed to disdain the earth, dashed swiftly by, the chariot was filled with a gay and joyous group. Mirth and Pleasure were holding high revelry, Selfishness drove the steeds, whilst Care stood upon the footboard ; almost blinded by the dust raised by the rolling wheels and trampling hoofs, the maiden closed

her eyes for a moment, she opened them again, and saw a poor man lying upon the ground; the gay chariot had crushed him to the earth. A few humble toilers soon gathered around; the maiden bade them, and they carried the poor man into a neighboring hut; they brought water from an adjacent brook and washed away the matted gore from the poor victim's brow. Under the teachings of the maiden, the rough toilers became gentle, tender and affectionate in their bearing toward the sufferer, and when the pale form of his wife bent over him, a tear stood in every manly eye, each toiler contributed his mite towards relieving the physical wants of the wife and children. The maiden stood lovingly by; she at length led the rough sympathisers to an open window, pointing to the blue expanse above, she told them of their own home, of their destiny, of the concealed springs in all human hearts, of many things that to them were both new and strange, and when she left them to return from whence she came, the rough, unseemly toilers, solemnly agreed to meet together often, to refresh their memories with the sweet maiden's words, to perform the deeds that she commanded in order to win the glorious reward she promised. Need we tell you, that the gay chariot was the world, that the angelic maiden was Charity or Love, and that the rude toilers were called Odd Fellows by their fellow men.

From an origin so humble, that its birth is involved in obscurity, yet so modern that it can scarcely be traced beyond the latter part of the last century, Odd Fellowship gradually spread from the manufacturing districts of England, until forty years ago it sprang into existence upon the shores of America. Now! the woodcutter in the forests of Maine, the miner amid the golden sands of California, the emigrant in Oregon, as well as the dwellers in the teeming cities, throughout the land, unite in celebrating this memorable day. Our halls dot the towns, the villages, and many portions of the open country, that

rejoice in being a component part of the great American confederacy. Tens of thousands minister before the altars of our Order, bow to the mild tenets of its ritual, and are witnesses of the truthfulness and efficacy of the doctrines it proclaims. This wonderful external progress has been accompanied with corresponding internal changes, thereby fitting the Order for a wider and nobler sphere of usefulness, by making it conform to an advanced view, of the material and moral needs of the age. *Progress* thus became a prominent characteristic of the institution, leading to successive fundamental reforms, until the Order has taken a high position among the benevolent and moral institutions that claim to be the human adjuncts of Christianity.

To Past Grand Sire Thomas Wildey belongs the honor of being regarded as the Father and Founder of American Odd Fellowship; for although other Lodges had been self-instituted, he was the first presiding officer of Washington Lodge, No. 1, organized in Baltimore, on the 26th of April, 1819, the fountain from which has emanated the extended affiliation, now known as the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Its records show that the Grand Lodge of the United States has, under its jurisdiction, thirty-nine Grand Lodges, located in the respective States and Territories of the Union, and in Canada, in active operation, subordinate to which there are three thousand three hundred and ninety working Lodges, composed of one hundred seventy-six thousand members. The sum of four hundred sixty-seven thousand dollars was disbursed during the past year, for the relief of distress, the burying of the dead, and the education of orphans. Where can we find a parallel to this history of beneficence, comprised as it is in the life-time of its founder. Yet our Order has just reason to anticipate still greater conquests, more glorious victories, until its ranks are swollen to millions, and its disbursements surpass human calculation. Who can estimate the value of world-wide *Fraternity*, which is but another name for *Love*!

“If faith and hope and kindness passed as coin ’twixt heart and heart,
 How through the eye’s tear blindness, would the sudden soul upstart,
 The dreary, dim, and desolate would wear a sunny bloom,
 And love would spring from buried hate, like flowers o’er winter’s tomb.
 This world is full of beauty, as other worlds above,
 And if we did our duty, it might be full of love.”

We base our hopes of the future spread and increasing usefulness of the Order, upon its past history, its present condition, its adaptation to the wants of mankind and on the truthfulness and grandeur of its principles. It is not a mere theory; no Utopian scheme; nor an effete Institution, but a vigorous, practical effort to illustrate upon the arena of daily life, the principles of action that should govern man, in his intercourse with his fellow man. Odd Fellowship is a living expedient of human progress, an experiment tried in this our day and age, to ascertain whether standing as we do upon the high mound of privilege, we are sufficiently elevated in our desires, and impressed with so high a sense of our duties, as to practically illustrate and exemplify to each other the “golden rule” of human action, the simple, sublime law of brotherhood and fraternity. If we are worthy of this high emprise, we can hasten the time when a generation will *live up to their professions, act out their belief*, “when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together” when the wilderness of man’s nature shall bud and blossom like the rose, when the mountains of pride, prejudice and bigotry in human hearts shall melt like icebergs in the tropics, beneath the power of LOVE.

Odd Fellowship does not consist in the regalia of the Order, in its commodious halls, its triumphal processions, or in its means and modes of recognition, these are but finite agencies, the mere scaffolding upon which the workmen are engaged in adjusting the stones of a moral temple that is more enduring than the pyramids; instrumentalities are temporal, but character eventuates into the eternal. Odd Fellowship consists in its principles, and in their *practical* application to the ills to which humanity is subject; it

consists in the grandeur of the sentiments that underlies its efforts for the good of our race, and in its demand upon its fervid disciples for a corresponding generosity of soul.

Odd Fellowship is the handmaid of religion, for which it expresses the most profound veneration. It does not pretend to occupy the place of the Church, or to fulfil its divine functions, but addresses itself to the human relations which Religion teaches, that all men bear to each other, and urges the perfect fulfilment of those obligations as productive of human happiness. The Order is not a vehicle for the conveyance of sectarianism, but it subscribes to the doctrine that underlies all creeds, "Good will to man." It interposes no barrier between God and man, it admits the supremacy of the Church in matters of faith, and allows every man to worship at his own altar, but demands the practice which should follow. The Order is a silent reproach to the infidelity of belief, by illustrating the practical duties of those who profess, but are waiting for the millenium before they put their professions into practice, who tacitly declare that to carry the Gospel into the Exchange, the Office, the Market, and the Street, is an impossibility, thus virtually charging God with being a hard master, of commanding what cannot be performed; such infidelity should be discarded. Religion demands more than a cold assent. Let bigots quarrel about creeds, but let the earnest man, alive to conscience, portray the effects of what the Apostle declared was "pure and undefiled religion," "to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a beneficial, charitable, and moral institution, it combines in itself all the best elements of a Health Assurance Society, superadded to which it inculcates in the most impressive manner the teachings of CHARITY, and the advantage and necessity of intellectual and moral culture. Upon the

payment of a small sum weekly, every member of the Order is entitled to a stipulated weekly allowance when sick; this is claimed and given as a *right*, as the fulfilment of a *contract*, the sick brother receives *his own*, and no one demurs at the rightful claim, no self-respect is wounded, no feelings of shame engendered; there is a marked distinction between the payment of a debt and the claims of benevolence. The prominent advantage of this provident relief consists in its being well timed, it advances upon the first approach of trouble, it strives to keep the man upright and independent. This principle of mutual helpfulness and mutual relief is one of the prominent characteristics of the Order, it is not the noblest of them, for should the amount awarded prove insufficient, then hearts instinct with the teachings of our ritual speak in the holy name of CHARITY, and the doors of our treasury open responsive to the call.

The benefactions of genuine, unostentatious Odd Fellows' Charity, conceal no sting, they open no wound afresh, they crimson no brow with honest shame, but bound together in fraternal ties, connected by the electric chain of brotherhood—sympathy—send its thrilling message to every heart. The secret, tender charities of the Order, fall like the gentle dew from heaven, refreshing the wasted and the parched, bidding the down trodden flowers of the field, revive, and clothing a sterile world with millennial verdure.

In order to give full scope to the comprehensive teachings of CHARITY, Odd Fellowship has laid the corner stone of a mighty temple, in which all nations, tongues and creeds may worship in concord and in peace—the corner stone, the great fundamental doctrine of Odd Fellowship is—THE UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD OF GOD, and the consequent BROTHERHOOD OF MAN. On this doctrine *Charity* builds her strongest claims upon human sympathy, from it springs TOLERATION, and every virtuous, refining thought and

feeling, that has a tendency to render men less selfish, and more human, by elevating the standard of humanity higher, and still higher, until man—*man universal*—attains to that position in the scale of created intelligences, which it was intended he should occupy, a “little lower than the angels.”

Odd Fellowship erects a world-wide platform, upon which all good men may stand, irrespective of country, party or creed; discussions upon questions, in relation to which men are divided into parties and sects are discountenanced, but the principles upon which all creeds and parties agree, are made the basis upon which they can act in harmony for the benefit and welfare of mankind. With the classifications, the *dollar distinctions* of human society, our Order is antagonistic; they are not permitted to enter our sanctuaries. Viewed in the light of a common brotherhood, how puerile and pretentious seem the distinctions, the affectations of society. Far nobler is that spirit which, recognizing no distinctions save those that exist between virtue and vice, strives to elevate the humble and purify the haughty, to develop the latent, hidden energies and affections of *all hearts*, to bring into active play and continued co-operation every aspiration for improvement, sending round the world its mandate of *HELP TO THE NEEDY*, accompanied with the injunction, to regard the body as the physical basis of that higher moral life, that dwells in the heart, the conscience, in good thoughts and in good deeds; in a word, that the immortal *mind is MAN*.

Ignorance and crime, destitution and misery abound upon every side; the scaffold, the jail, the pauper's asylum cast their gloomy shadows on the earth, whilst in the by-ways of our cities there exists an amount of vice and wretchedness scarcely conceivable, and which defies the ingenuity of the philanthropist to remedy. Human laws merely attempt to restrain vice, they have no cure for the evil, but is there no remedy for the evils of society, no hope of the extirpation of brutal passions and savage instincts?

Will the abodes of wealth and refinement for ever be encircled with the hovels of the destitute, the miserable homes of the pariahs of social life; will advancing civilization continue to produce from its bosom *monsters*, as heathen like in their practices as the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands? There must be an antidote, if there be truth in prophecy, and any ground for the faith we have in civilization, in the dignity of manhood, and the perfectibility of human character. No mere theory will accomplish this end, however truthful and beautiful it may appear; it must be a direct and practical application of the great truths which have been enunciated as the only remedy for social evils. In things human as in things divine, "no other foundation can man lay than that which has been laid." Christianity is the foundation of all true reforms, its commands are, to "Love thy neighbor as thyself," to "do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you."

Law implies penalty; the violations of these simple but sublime ethical laws are attended with consequences to society that are fearful to contemplate, even in professedly Christian lands. There must be a radical change in *the elements that constitute society*; nothing less than the perfect fulfillment of *all* the relations of the *individual* to God, to himself, and to his fellow man. Society can be regenerated, mankind improved, by correct moral principles being diffused through, and ACTED UPON by the masses; by converting the great body of *negative belief* into *positive practice*, bringing the highest code of ethics down to the humblest walks, the every day pursuits of human life.

To be an Odd Fellow in spirit and in truth, requires something more than mere membership, something beyond being in "good standing" upon the Secretary's books, more even than an active participation in the duties of the Lodge room. Whilst it is necessary for the perpetuation of the Order, and the moral discipline of the individual, that he should attest his devotion by his attendance at the

Lodge, sharing its labors, running with "willing feet" upon its errands of charity, and speaking its sympathetic language to the distressed. Yet the WORLD is the Odd Fellow's great field of labor. He is nothing, if not a man *speaking by example, a seeker after truth*, in order to improve his mind and elevate his character, to increase his capabilities for good, and to extend the sphere of his affections. Standing in his place, no matter how humble it may be, as a friend to every effort that has a tendency to improve the physical and spiritual condition of mankind, a good citizen, a pure patriot, an unselfish philanthropist, thinking justly and heartily upon all the great questions which affect man's fraternal relations; he thus becomes a constant benefactor to his race, and contributes by his actions to the final establishment of the great REPUBLIC OF HUMANITY.

Time would fail in an attempt to enumerate a tithe of the examples which could be adduced of the advantages of the Order; the history of every Lodge is replete with them. Let them remain untold—it is better that the Order be prejudged by its enemies, than that a single recipient of its bounty should be pained by the revelation of its beneficence, for the world looks upon the dispensations of Charity as alms-giving to paupers. Yet there are some illustrations which can be given without violating any obligation, or causing pain to any sensitive mind. Let one suffice.

During the late war with Mexico, whilst the Pennsylvania Regiment under command of Colonel Wynkoop, was stationed at the Castle of Perote, skirmishes were continually occurring with the Guerillas; one day two American soldiers were wounded and carried by their comrades to the hospital, one of them belonged to a Regiment of the United States Infantry, his home was in Burlington, Iowa, the other was a volunteer in the South Carolina or Palmetto Regiment; after some time had elapsed, the man from Iowa was declared to be convalescent by the physician, and permitted to leave the hospital; he immediately waited

upon Col. Wynkoop, and requested permission to remain in the hospital to nurse his comrade; the request though an unusual one was granted, the circumstance attracted the Colonel's attention, and in his rounds he always stopped to converse with the volunteer and his nurse. One night the Colonel was awoke by the guard, who informed him that there was a man dying in the hospital, who wished to speak to him. The Colonel immediately repaired to the hospital, where he found the young soldier of the Palmetto Regiment rapidly sinking into the ranks of the dead; he had however strength enough remaining to place in the Colonel's hand a packet of letters, and asked him to forward them to his mother and sisters. "I have secured to them all the property that I possessed, accept my thanks for your kindness, write to them; when I am dead tell them if I have done my duty as a soldier, and of this, my friend, who has stood in their place." The Colonel promised compliance with his wishes, and in a short time the volunteer expired. The Iowa man was kneeling by the bedside, with the hand of his comrade clasped in his own. The Colonel touched him upon the shoulder, and he arose. "Who is this man? What do you know of his family and friends?" The soldier replied that he did not know, except what his comrade had told him, that they were strangers until they had met in the hospital. "Why," said the Colonel, "this is singular, you come from different sections of the country, were unknown to each other, but your devotion is not unknown to me. I know of your daily sacrifices, the giving up of many necessities for yourself, in order to procure little comforts for your comrade; this is something so different from what I am accustomed to witnessing in camp, that I would like to know the reason." The man demurred, until the Colonel laid it upon him as a command, when he said, what you have doubtless surmised, *he was a brother Odd Fellow.*

The pathos with which Col. Wynkoop narrated this

incident, in my hearing, carried me in imagination to the sunny South, to a village in the Palmetto State, at the time when the postman delivered the packet with the Colonel's letter. I saw it borne to the mother, her look of agony as she read how her brave boy, on whom she had lavished so much love, and for whom she had such bright hopes for the future, had been wounded; had lingered some time and died, in a soldier's hospital. Oh! she exclaimed, that I could have wiped the death damps from his brow, that his sisters, that he loved so dearly, could have ministered at his bedside, she read on, the Colonel's words of commendation, and then how a comrade, a rough soldier, had stood by her boy, in the place of those who loved him, and were loved in return, that this soldier whose humanity had been the solace of her son, was also an *Odd Fellow*, then methought, mother and sisters knelt together, and in the midst of their anguish called down a blessing from heaven on the soldier, and on the Order that had so firmly impressed its principles on the mind of a disciple, that he had lovingly exemplified them when surrounded by all the brutalising influences of war. We believe that in this, as in all other cases, the genial, affectionate influences of the Order secure to it woman's sympathy, and woman's prayers, when she sees it illustrated, as she often does, in the domestic circle; it is this belief, and having confidence in the righteousness of our purposes, that has caused us to inscribe upon our banners, the motto of our Order—"IN GOD WE TRUST."

In addition to the great advantages of the Order, in its ministrations to the sick, its relief of the destitute, in its moral teachings, and its intellectual aids, whereby it commends itself to the Christian and philanthropist, it is also deserving of the encomiums of the patriot, for its truly conservative and national character, its bond of fraternity strengthens the links of the American Union. At the Annual Sessions of the Grand Lodge of the United States,

every State in the Union sends its representatives, to legislate for a brotherhood, spread over a continent. The representatives return to their homes with the feeling of fraternity strengthened, their regard for their brothers of the various States increased. If ever there be a struggle before the altars of our common country, the last ones that will be deserted are those altars round which Odd Fellows gather.

It is gratifying to us as Pennsylvanians to know that the largest number of members under any State Grand Lodge, are in this jurisdiction, that Pennsylvania occupies the same position in Odd Fellowship, that it does in the federal Union, the keystone of a glorious arch.

Brothers, you are the true expounders of Odd Fellowship, its living apostles; the world will judge the Order by your actions, and remember also that the all-seeing eye of God is continually watching over you; bear ever with you a high sense of responsibility, the unconscious marks of those who have ministered in the temples wherein LOVE stands enthroned, supported on one hand by warm, heroic FRIENDSHIP, and on the other by clear eyed TRUTH. You may by living up to the standard of our ritual, by the consistency of your practice with your professions, erect a monument of gratitude upon human hearts that will pierce the heavens.

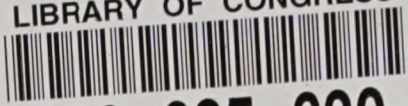
“A single virtuous action, hath more worth
Than all the pyramids, and glory writes a more enduring epitaph
Upon one generous deed, than on the Sarcophagus
In which Sesostris meant to sleep.”

Brothers, much is expected at our hands; let us strive to realize all just expectations, remembering that individual effort is necessary to combined success; posterity may justly expect that we bequeath to them, not only unimpaired but increased, the inheritance we now enjoy, so that the Order for successive generations, with all its powers and instrumentalities, may be used as a lever to be inserted beneath

the moral framework of society, for the elevation of our race, until the time shall arrive when every man in every place shall meet a *brother and a friend*, when *universal Love* shall be shouted and re-echoed from valley and mountain top, when the nations of the earth shall unite in chanting that grand anthem, first heard by the shepherds of Galilee, "GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, ON THE EARTH, PEACE AND GOOD WILL TO MAN."

Brothers, *Come on*, let us march side by side and shoulder to shoulder together in our moral warfare against vice, until selfishness which now rules the world shall come "tumbling like a tyrant from its throne," and heaven born charity ascend the pedestal, commanding the valleys to be exalted and the mountains to be laid low, transforming the world from a desert of despair to a garden of delight. Animated by faith in man's future history

"I can conceive a time when the world shall be
 Much better visibly, and when as far
 As social life and its relations tend
 Men, morals, manners shall be lifted up
 To a pure height we know not of, nor dream
 When all men's rights and duties shall be clear
 And charitably exercised and borne;
 When education, conscience, and good deeds
 Shall have just equal sway, and civil claims
 Great crimes shall be cast out as were of old
 Devils possessing madmen. LOVE shall reign
 HUMANITY be rethroned, and MAN sublimed."



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